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AUTHOR Fenton, Ray; O'Leary, Neil
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ABSTRACT

A teacher communication skills training program to improve instruction, Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement (TESA), is described in this report, with a focus on the effect of improved instructional communication competence on academic achievement. In particular, the advocates of TESA hope that communication skills training will have a positive effect on the progress of low achievers and minority students. Methodology involved the administration of program evaluations to 27 principals and 2 groups of participating teachers: 118 teachers completed an assessment after the third workshop and 96 completed an end assessment. Results of pre- and post-achievement tests of 1,366 students for the years 1983-89 were also analyzed. Findings indicate that the program failed to significantly increase the academic achievement of minority students and low achievers; however, most of the teachers and approximately half of the principals reported changed instructional behaviors and improved student attitudes and achievement. The discrepant outcomes indicate that the program's underlying concept of instructional communication is problematic because of the lack of a relational orientation. Observations are made about the interaction between various communication behaviors, and the recommendation is made for development of a relational model of instructional communication that focuses on teacher-student characteristics and behaviors, the educational context, goals, and outcomes. Three statistical tables are included. (54 references) (LMI)

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IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH ENHANCING THE INSTRUCTIONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE OF TEACHERS

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RAY FENTON
ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
4600 DeBarr Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99519
(907) 269-2211
Bitnet -- AYRF@ALASKA

NEIL O'LEARY
ALASKA PACIFIC UNIVERSITY
4101 University Drive
Anchorage, Alaska 99508
(907) 561-2010

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IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH ENHANCING THE INSTRUCTIONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE OF TEACHERS

INTRODUCTION

There is no communication environment in which the desired outcomes of discourse may be stated more clearly than in that of the classroom. The motives of the participants and commonly shared intention that students profit in terms of knowledge, experience, and an improved ability to function all come together to make instructional communication a unique and interesting area of social exchange where communication behaviors can be related directly to desired outcomes.

In the area of instruction, various communication behaviors may be isolated and studied to ascertain those strategies which will best facilitate the increase of student knowledge and improve the ability of the student to function. Unfortunately, the general agreement of educators that there are communication behaviors which are critical to competent instructional communication does not free the theorist from the need for careful definition of the categorical variables which constitute competent instructional behaviors in various educational settings.

This paper reviews the attempt of a school district to improve instruction by providing experienced teachers with training in a specified set of communication skills through the TESA program. It examines five years of data collected from teachers and students. The paper then considers the implications of that data which show that the successful training of teachers in behaviors generally accepted as important and effective communication skills had only a minimal effect on the academic achievement of students. The conceptualization of instructional communication underlying the TESA program is questioned and identified as a problem because of the lack of a relational orientation.

The paper concludes with some observations about the interplay of various communication behaviors and suggests a relational model of instructional communication which might be useful as a guide for further attempts to explore and improve the communication skills of teachers.

THE TESA STUDY: INCREASED ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH ENHANCED INSTRUCTIONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Background of TESA: Teacher Expectations, Instructional Communication and Student Achievement.

TESA, Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement, grew from the idea that harmful differential treatment of students results from inaccurate or incomplete characterizations of students which in turn effect the communication behavior of teachers and limit the potential for successful student achievement. The publication of Rosenthal and Jacobson's Pygmalion in the Classroom (1968) and the subsequent research of educators who sought to define the self-fulfilling prophecy effect (Brophy and Good, 1970) led to an extensive consideration of the instructional communication behaviors which effect student performance (Cooper and Good, 1983).

Twenty years of research in education have demonstrated the complexity of the link between expectations, instructional behaviors, and student outcomes. To some effect, the early concern of differential treatment based on expectation *per se* has been set aside as it has been demonstrated that the expectations of teachers grow from their actual experience and that these more or less accurate expectations support a wide variety of effective instructional communication behaviors.

In an extensive summary and review article on teacher expectations, "Two Decades of Research on Teacher Expectations: Findings and Future Directions", Thomas Good (1987) took pains to examine the evolution of expectations based theory and supporting research which constitute the current thinking on teacher expectation effects. He points out that "...inservice teachers usually develop accurate expectations about their students, and they tend to change these expectations as more or better information becomes available" (Good, 1987, p. 34). However, he also notes that there has been a wide variety of behaviors identified which sometimes indicate differential expectations and that these actual differences in the treatment of high and low achieving students can have negative effects. A recent review of various indicators of differential treatment of students by Good and Brophy (1987) found examples of the links between expectation, instructional communication, and student outcomes. Good and Brophy (1987) divided 68 of the studies which they reviewed into 17 categories which may be easily related to instructional communication.

Good and Brophy (1987)
Differential Behaviors Based on Expectations

Behavior Category	Studies Cited
1. Waiting less time for low achievers to answer.	4
2. Giving answers to lows or asking elsewhere.	2
3. Rewarding inappropriate behavior.	9
4. Criticizing lows more for failure.	8
5. Praising low achievers less for success.	10
6. Failing to give public feedback for lows.	4
7. Interacting less with low achievers.	8

8.	Questioning low achievers less in class or only asking simple and non-analytic questions.	4
9.	Seating low achievers further from the teacher.	2
11.	Interacting with low achievers more privately.	1
10.	Demanding less elaborated responses of lows.	2
12.	Grading tests and assignments differently.	3
13.	Fewer friendly interactions with low achievers.	7
14.	Giving brief and less informative feedback when low achievers ask questions.	2
15.	Giving less eye contact and fewer nonverbal cues.	1
16.	More time consuming sequences of instructional behaviors, with less positive effect.	1
17.	Less acceptance of low achiever's ideas	1
	Total	68

There is a developing literature in instructional communication based on the behaviors of teachers and students which suggests that there may be many profitable links between the fields of Education and Communication. DeWine and Pearson (1989) have argued that the field of Communication can make a special contribution to the field of education because of its special focus on verbal and non-verbal symbolic activities which goes beyond more general discussions of theories of learning and educational philosophies or styles common in Education courses. They suggest that the purpose of a communication based course of training for teachers is "to improve the communication strategies used by teachers so that learning can take place." They describe a program of study which was developed in Ohio where basic communication models are used to organize teacher training. Topics of training mentioned in the Ohio courses include speaker roles, listener roles, feedback, channels of communication, encoding, decoding, teacher credibility, student perceptions, power in the classroom, communication apprehension, positive reinforcement, self-concept, problem solving, social styles, semantics, nonverbal communication, impression formation, organizational theory, communication networks, communication channels, leadership, meeting management, decision making, assertiveness, interviewing, listening, and small group behavior.

Instructional communication competence is the appropriate application of effective instructional strategies within an educational context. Without trying to fully explore and categorize even the major streams of research in the area, there are five emerging themes which stand out.

> Developmental or life span communication studies which emphasize the growth of communication knowledge, skill, and style from infancy to death. (c.f. Nussbaum and Prusank, 1989)

Communication apprehension and the psychological states of teachers and students which may effect the choice to enter into communication, the communication behaviors selected, and the ability to enact communication behaviors. (c.f. Wheeless, 1971; Scott and Wheeless, 1977; Hurt, Scott, and McCroskey, 1978).

The style of instruction used by teachers. (c.f. Norton, 1977; Javindi, Downs and Nussbaum, 1988).

Characteristics of teacher - student relationships such as *Immediacy* (Anderson, 1979; Anderson and Anderson, 1984, 1987; Richmond, Gorham and McCroskey, 1984; Gorham, 1988); *Power* (Kearney, 1987; Kearney, Plax, Richmond, and McCroskey, 1984, 1985) and *Solidarity* (Nussbaum and Scott, 1980) *Shared Codes* (Applegate, 1980) and *Shared Perspectives* (Bickel, 1985).

A host of other specific instructional behaviors which have been examined in an effort to identify teacher effectiveness and the criteria by which teachers might be fairly evaluated in terms of their effectiveness (c.f. Fenton and Nancarrow, 1990; O'Leary and Fenton, 1990 a,b).

None of research from either the field of Education or the field of Communication has demonstrated that the increase in the instructional communication competence of teachers has much of an effect on student academic achievement, which is stressed in the TESA program. Most of the studies reviewed in education focus on demonstrating that differences exist in teacher treatment which may be correlated to a classification of the student without any measure of student growth or change over time. Most of the Communication studies reviewed are still at the stage of defining variables and their effects in the natural environment or examining the effects of changed communication behaviors on the part of teachers. This study and the TESA program focus on the effect of increased instructional communication competence on academic achievement.

TESA was developed to modify a set of specific communication behaviors which had been identified from the expectancy research of the early 1970's. The program was supported by the Los Angeles Unified School District as part of an attempt to assure that minority students were given equal opportunities for participation in the classroom (Los Angeles County Superintendent, 1974). The program was approved as a teacher training program by the State of California in 1974 and was recognized by Phi Delta Kappa as an exemplary program. Phi Delta Kappa continues to support TESA and publishes course materials for use by TESA trainers (Kerman and Martin, 1980).

The TESA program was adopted as a part of the Anchorage School District in-service program for teachers in 1984 in the hope that training in communication skills would have a positive effect on the achievement of low achievers and minority students. This paper examines the communication skills training included in the TESA program and reports on the effects of the program on teachers and students over a period of five years.

Between 1984 and 1988 data were collected from teachers and students. Teachers were asked to assess the quality of the program and the effect of the program on their teaching. Student achievement was measured with standardized norm referenced tests. In 1989, principals were asked to comment on the effect of TESA training on teacher's instructional skills.

How the TESA Program Worked in Anchorage.

TESA is an in-service training program based on research which showed that "teacher interactions with students perceived as 'low achievers' is less supportive and less motivating than those interactions normally practiced with students perceived as 'high achievers' (Kerman and Martin, 1980, G-2)". Teachers participate in a series of six three-hour workshops which are held approximately one month apart. During the initial meeting, teachers form teams of 5 or 6 members who work together discussing instructional communication behaviors, practicing the behaviors in their classrooms, observing each other practicing the behaviors in their classes, and discussing the effects of their efforts to learn new skills and apply them to high and low achieving students.

Teachers meet over a course of months during which they participate in workshops designed to improve instructional communication skills. Each workshop emphasizes specific communication behaviors. Teachers watch demonstration lessons or films, practice using the specific skills, and discuss procedures for observing and coding the communication skills. A month after the workshop in which skills are introduced, the participants discuss their observations of other team members, the overall results of trying out skills and their feelings about how well they are communicating with students. Three new skills are introduced each month until a total of 15 skills have been introduced and practiced.

The first five workshops each introduce three types of skills. The sixth and final workshop is for evaluation, review, and discussion of the TESA experience. The same general format was followed through the five years of this study though different trainers may have placed more or less emphasis on various skills and slightly different demonstration lessons were used. The same Phi Delta Kappa training manual was used by participants for all five years.

TESA
SKILL STRANDS

Unit	Strand A: Response Opportunities	Strand B: Feedback	Strand C Personal Regard
1	Equitable Distribution	Affirm or Correct	Proximity
2	Individual Helping	Feedback	Courtesy
3	Latency	Praise	Personal Regard Compliments
4	Delving, Rephrasing Giving Clues	Listening	Touching
5	Higher Level Questioning	Accepting Feelings:Empathy	Desisting: Discipline

The observation and recording of the target behaviors by teachers is a key element in the TESA activity cycle. Prior to the start of the observations, up to five high and low achieving students are identified by each teacher. High and low are defined relative to the class group as those students who are performing at the "lowest level" or "highest level" academically. Team members were then asked to code all of the target behavior interactions between the observed teacher and the ten identified students for one lesson for each other team member each month. Observations were collected, averaged, and returned to each team and team member.

No effort was made to determine the inter-rater reliability of team members but TESA materials provided detailed descriptions of the behaviors to be coded, examples of the behaviors are provided prior to the observations as part of the training workshops, and teachers within each participant team discuss the behaviors which will be observed and coded prior to any actual coding.

The workshops and observations set up an almost perfect pedagogical cycle of introduction, demonstration, guided practice, massed practice, review and reinforcement. The month long practice with observation by fellow teachers produces persistence in the practice of the behaviors stressed in each workshop. The monthly reports on observations and debriefing allow an opportunity for praise and the thoughtful reconsideration of the effects of implementing the specific communication behaviors practiced during the month.

Of course, if the communication behaviors of teachers are effected by TESA participation, there should be a corresponding effect on student behaviors. These changes include an increase in the quality and quantity of positive reinforcement received by all students and a notable increase in participation on the part of the identified "low achievers." The complementary changes in behavior might then be expected to be self-reinforcing for both teachers and students resulting in long term, ongoing changes which would last long beyond participation in the TESA workshops and perhaps even gain in strength as success builds upon success.

Assessing the Impact of TESA on Student Achievement.

The two major questions addressed by this study relate back to the goal of the TESA program to improve student academic performance through positively changing teacher communication behaviors. First, did the TESA training of teachers have a positive effect on student achievement, particularly the achievement of minority group members and of those students identified by teachers as "low achievers"? Second, did the TESA training of teachers have a positive effect on the skill of teachers as communicators? A third and subsidiary question relates to the satisfaction of participants with TESA as a pre-packaged program to improve instructional communication skills and the viability of TESA as a model of an instructional communication skills training program.

Data were collected from teachers participating in TESA during 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88. Information collected included identification of "high" and "low" achievers and questionnaires assessing the quality of the TESA program and the impact of TESA training on instructional skills. An additional questionnaire was distributed at the end of the five year period to principals in schools where TESA participants were working.

During 1984-85, most participants refused to provide an identification of the students which they had labeled "high" or "low" achievers resulting in missing achievement data for that year. There was also a change made in the end-of-program evaluation questionnaire in 1985-86, but only those items which remained consistent through the years of the study have been included in this report.

The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, grades 1 through 8, and Tests of Achievement and Proficiency, grades 9 through 11, were used to assess student academic achievement. Tests were administered in the spring of each year as part of a regular school district testing program which gathered achievement data on all non-special education English speaking students. The directions of the test maker were followed in test administration and scoring.

Over the course of five years, 1,366 students were identified as "high" or "low" achievers by 148 TESA participants. At least one ITBS/TAP score was

available for 1,275 of these students. Chart 2 shows the number of students identified each year. Statistical analyses include only students who have scores from the Spring prior to the participation of their teacher in TESA, pre-test; the Spring following the TESA participation, post-test; and the Spring one year after the participation of the teacher, delayed post-test. Because of the relatively small number of teachers represented, fewer than 5% of the teachers in Anchorage, it is likely that students were not in a classroom with a TESA trained teacher in the one year later post-test year.

Chart 2
Achievement Data
Measurement Dates

Pre-Test	Post-Test	Delayed Post-Test	Number of Students
1983	1984	1985	266
1984	1985	1986	358
1985	1986	1987	17
1986	1987	1988	433
1987	1988	1989	292
Total			1366

Composite percentile rank scores were computed for each student who completed all ITBS or TAP subtests and converted to Normal Curve Equivalent, NCE, scores with a mean of 50 and standard deviation of 21.06. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, SPSS-X, was used for all statistical analysis (SPSS-X, 1983).

There were 663 students, 49%, who had ITBS scores available for a pre- to post-test comparison and 522 students, 38%, with scores available for a pre- to delayed post-test comparison. There was a small but significant increase in the mean NCE ITBS Composite score from 58.0 to 59.1 from the time of the pre-test to the time of the post test ($t = 2.97$, $df = 662$, $p \leq .003$). There was a small but not significant increase in the mean NCE ITBS Composite score from 59.7 to 60.5 from the time of the pre-test to the time of the one year delayed post test ($t = 1.68$, $df = 521$, $p \leq .09$). While the differences are positive, they are so small that they show little or no impact on the actual academic achievement level of the student.

Tables 1 and 2 show that when the gains made between the the pre-test and post-test or the delayed post-test are examined using an analysis of variance, differences which might have been attributed to either the achievement levels of the students as identified by teachers, "high" or "low" achievers, or by the ethnicity of the students, white or minority are non-significant. There were also no significant interaction effects.

Table 1
TESA
Achievement Gains - Post-Test Gain
Analysis of Variance
N = 463

Sources of Variation	S.S.	D.F.	M.S.	F.	P. ≤
Main Effects	254.41	2	127.20	1.47	.229
Achievement	138.13	1	138.13	1.60	.206
Ethnicity	114.23	1	114.23	1.32	.250
Two Way Interactions	35.07	1	35.07	.40	.524
Achievement/Ethnic	35.07	1	35.07	.40	.524
Explained	289.48	3	96.49	1.12	.340
Residual	39499.33	459	86.05		
Total	39788.81	462	86.12		

TESA
Achievement Gains - One Year Post-Test Gain
Analysis of Variance
N = 463

Sources of Variation	S.S.	D.F.	M.S.	F.	P. ≤
Main Effects	24.15	2	12.07	.10	.901
Achievement	.02	1	.02	.00	.990
Ethnicity	24.14	1	24.14	.21	.647
Two Way Interactions	36.27	1	36.27	.31	.575
Achievement/Ethnic	36.27	1	36.27	.31	.575
Explained	660.42	3	20.14	.17	.913
Residual	52913.30	459	115.28		
Total	52973.73	462	114.66		

The authors went on to examine the differences in the mean achievement gains for paired samples for high and low achievers and for white and minority students because of the strength of statements made by the authors of TESA concerning the academic gains which would accrue to minority students and low achievers. The only significant group differences where a 1.78 NCE gain for high achievers and a 1.07 NCE gain for white students shown below. That is, minority and low achievers failed to make gains as might be expected from the claims of the TESA program but majority and high achievers did make small but significant gains.

Table 3
TESA
Pre-Post Test Mean NCE Differences

Group/Variable	N	Mean.	Diff.	S.D..	t	D.F.	P. ≤
Low Achievers							
Pre-Test	301	46.89		17.29			
Post Test		47.16	.26	17.42	.43	300	.66
Pre-Test	216	48.25		17.13			
Post-Test Two		49.15	.89	16.75	1.08.	215	.28
High Achievers							
Pre-Test	361	67.31		16.01			
Post-Test One		69.09	1.78	16.37	4.14	360	.00
Pre-Test	305	67.82		15.74			
Post-Test Two		68.57	.74	16.36	1.44.	304	.15
Minority Students							
Pre-Test	153	51.29		20.06			
Post-Test One		52.37	1.08	19.42	1.32	152	.18
Pre-Test	116	53.21		19.04			
Post-Test Two		53.70	.48	18.62	.42	210	.67
White Students							
Pre-Test	510	60.02		18.82			
Post-Test One		61.10	1.07	19.66	2.66	509	.00
Pre-Test	406	61.53		18.53			
Post-Test Two		62.38	.86	18.85	1.74	405	.08

It is positive that there were gains made by students overall but it is vexing that the gains were so small and that the groups which contributed to the gains found for the overall program were the higher achieving students and white students. While the goal of TESA is to improve achievement for all students, the program was specifically designed and implemented to provide equal opportunities for participation for low achieving and minority students. The program failed to significantly increase the academic achievement of minority students and low achievers.

Assessing the Impact of TESA Training on Teachers and Principals.

Teachers were asked to complete two assessments of their TESA training experience. The first assessment was completed by a total of 118 teachers after completion of the third workshop of each series to ascertain the reaction to the effectiveness of the TESA approach and satisfaction with the process of observation and practice in the classroom. The second end-of-program assessment was completed by 96 teachers following the last workshop and debriefing session. End-of-program assessments were missing for the second year of the program.

Assessment items were presented in a Likert-like format which asked teachers to indicate their degree of agreement with statements concerning the program. Scales ran from 1, highest level of agreement, to 5, lowest level of agreement.

On the mid-program questionnaire, 95% had indicated that they were comfortable with the TESA approach of practicing behaviors in their classrooms with peer observers. Ninety two percent, 92%, felt that the interaction with observers of their classroom behavior was of professional benefit. The majority, 82 out of the 118 or 70% of the group, felt that the TESA skills would result in increased student achievement.

At the conclusion of the program the teachers were asked to select the most and the least effective of the various interaction skills in "bringing about a positive change in your perceived 'lows'." The three top skills selected were: latency, higher level questioning, and equitable distribution of opportunities to respond. The three bottom skills selected were: desisting, proximity and personal interest. However no item was selected as most effective by more than 34 of the 96 respondents and no item was selected as least effective by fewer than 7 teachers.

The overall average rating on 11 positively worded scales was 1.4. The average was 1.3 on the 5 items which related to the quality of the workshop materials, quality of presentations, and the attitude of the presenters. On content related items, 80% selected the higher levels of agreement, 1 or 2 as their rating of the degree to which they were introduced to new skills. Even more, 87%, felt that adopting the instructional behaviors resulted in more positive student attitudes. Ninety-three percent, 93%, felt that their own attitudes had improved toward the identified "low" achievers and 99% felt they had improved in their attitudes toward "high" achievers.

The evaluations of the program by teachers involved in TESA were very positive. Teachers liked the process of TESA and the collegial and group oriented activities. Teachers felt that they had changed their instructional communication behaviors and they felt that those changes had a positive effect on student achievement.

Principals were given a questionnaire to determine the extent to which they were able to see improved instructional communication skills and positive outcomes for students due to TESA participation. The questionnaire was distributed to 44 principals who had supervised teachers enrolled in the TESA program between 1983 and 1988. The questionnaires were returned by 27 principals for a response rate of approximately 61%. Items were Likert-like statements with 1 representing "not at all" and 5 representing "greatly".

Fifty-five percent of the principals felt that TESA participation had greatly improved the instructional skills of their participating teachers. Fifty-two percent felt that there had been a positive effect upon student achievement. Fifty-six percent felt that the program benefited both high and low achieving students.

While the actual knowledge of the principals about the content of the TESA workshops is a matter of conjecture, the majority of the responding principals identified listening (18), latency (17), proximity (17), and equitable distribution of responses (16) as the most important skills where they felt they saw an improvement in instruction.

Conclusions from the assessment of TESA training in Anchorage.

In-service training of teachers in instructional communication skills can have a positive effect on both teachers and students. The enhanced instructional skills produced by participation in TESA training resulted in better teaching skills and improved teacher-student communication as reported by teachers and principals. The expected improvement in academic achievement as measured by a norm referenced test of basic skills was minimal and seemed to be limited for the most part to white and high achieving students.

The TESA model of instruction, demonstration, guided practice, practice with observation, and reflection appears to be an effective means of introducing and reinforcing instructional communication skills for in-service teachers. The format of the program with three hours of classroom instruction and 5 hours of observation each month for six months worked well and was liked by teachers.

Teachers and principals reported that the instructional skills of teachers were improved. Most also felt that they saw an improvement in the academic performance of students, particularly low achieving students.

Unfortunately, the increased use of the instructional communication skills by TESA trained teachers seemed had little impact on achievement as measured by the Iowa/TAP tests. It may argued that the tests are too imprecise and too unrelated to the specific content of instruction to show the true impact of

TESA or that the TESA skills had effects on other non-academic factors such as attitude toward school. However, the claims made by the TESA program were based on a limited testing of students with other norm referenced tests similar to those used in this study (Los Angeles County Superintendent, 1974) and the Iowa/TAP tests are proven indicators of overall student academic achievement.

It may also be that the teachers who volunteered for the TESA program chose to participate because they were already sensitive to the importance of communication with all students and were refining existing skills without making significant changes in instruction which would effect student achievement. There was no opportunity to examine the instructional communication behaviors prior to the TESA participation. There can be no absolute certainty that actual behaviors of teachers were substantially changed even though teachers and principals reported changed behaviors and the enactment of TESA behaviors was observed and documented in the classroom.

The TESA instructional model appears to be a good one and there is no reason why the model could not be adapted to other instructional communication skills. The Anchorage School District has updated the TESA program and now plans to offer an in-service package called "Beyond TESA" which incorporates many of the small group management skills currently emphasized as "cooperative learning" in teacher preparation programs. The popularity of the TESA training approach should make it worth while for those interested in communication education to get other instructional communication competencies identified and packaged into in-service training classes for teachers.

The minimal gains in academic achievement in the face of the satisfaction of teachers and principals with the program and the belief of teachers that they had a positive effect on low achievers and on minority students was a stimulus to the authors to review the TESA experience and reflect on what did not happen as well as what did in the course of TESA training and home classroom activities. The authors concluded that the potential weakness in TESA was one of perspective and focus. TESA is an in-service training program for teachers which focuses is only on the behavior of the teacher. Even in the observation of the communication skills in the classroom, the focus was on the enacting of the skill by the teacher with either no or only a minimal regard to appropriate student responses.

In the context of instructional communication, the focus should be on the relationship between the teacher and the student or students. Success in the attainment of academic goals depends on both the teacher and the student being competent communicators.

This suggested to the authors that a relational model of instructional communication would have served as a more effective guide in both the planning of TESA and in the study of the program's potential effects on students and teachers.

TOWARD A RELATIONAL MODEL OF INSTRUCTIONAL COMMUNICATION

Reflection on TESA and the TESA approach to training teachers in communication skills without reference to the student response led the authors back to familiar theoretical territory. Communication, as typically modeled, requires a source, a message, a channel, and a receiver connected in a shared interpersonal experience (c.f. Berlo, 1960). The problem with much of the approach to communication in education is that the modification of the communication behaviors of the teacher (source/receiver) is often undertaken without regard to the student (receiver/source) as an equal participant in a reciprocal and interactive co-dependent relationship. It is necessary to shift the theoretical orientation, from the correlational association of discrete teacher behaviors with high and low achievement and other outcome variables, to a relational model of interaction which anticipates competent participation by both teachers and their students.

In a practical sense, the key to success in instructional communication is this effective reciprocal communication between teacher and learner which results in the accomplishment of the goals which are specified in any particular instructional exchange.

Instructional communication provides a context where a communication competence based relational model has a unique potential for success. Much of the seeming lack of correspondence between the motivations of the participants in a relationship, knowledge of specific effective skills drawn from a known universe of communication skills, situationally appropriate skill choices, and measures of effectiveness which have been noted as problems in theorizing about relational communication competence (c.f. McCroskey, 1982; Pearson and Daniels, 1989; and Spitzberg and Cupach, 1989) are overcome or simplified in the instructional context.

Following the arguments developed in Spitzberg's (1983) response to McCroskey (1982), it is possible to develop some propositions which are useful in framing a relational theory of instructional communication competence. Following Spitzberg (1983):

1. Competence is contextual and can only be judged appropriately within the constraints of the specific context.

2. Competence "accomplishes personal objectives in an interpersonally appropriate manner (p. 325)".

3. Competence is judged according to a continuum of effectiveness and appropriateness.

4. Competence in a specific interaction can only be fully or competently judged for appropriateness and effectiveness by the relational participants in a given episode.

It is immediately obvious that some of the complexities of personal motivation and the judgement of competence in terms of the relationship of teacher and student fall away or are at least subject to reasonable operationalization within the instructional communication context. The motivation of the communicators is related to deriving a benefit from the specific instructional exchange. The desired benefit of the exchange can be defined in terms of some knowledge or skill. The time, setting, and limits of the cycle of communication events which make up the instructional unit can be defined. Even the time at which it is appropriate to judge competence can be clearly identified as the end of a unit of instruction.

If this orientation is adopted, instructional communication competence becomes a more global situational construct rather than one tied to a set of specific behaviors for one of the participants without regard for the reciprocity of teaching and learning. The participants come to the common situation with their own motivation, their own repertoire of communication skills, their own ability to understand the situation, their own beliefs about what constitutes both competence and personally possible alternative communication strategies, and their own reactions to the flow of communication events through the situation of an exchange, a lesson, a unit, or a course of instruction. Competent instructional communication can now be defined in terms of the interplay of communication events which produces attainment of the goal specified for the instructional unit by either, both, or all of the participants in the exchange.

Without going into too much detail at this point in our attempt to conceptualize the elements of this relational model, it is clear to the authors that there has been a good deal of ground work done over the past 20 years which will ease the burden of those who wish to identify the elements to be considered in any specific instructional exchange which is to be used as a basis for the study of effective and competent communication behaviors.

First, there is the instructional context. The instructional context may be thought of as the ground upon which instructional communication takes place. In a physical sense, it is often a setting which has been structured to facilitate communication, such as a cheerful classroom with movable furniture. In a psychological sense, it is often a special place where individuals seek to come together to improve their skills or increase their knowledge. Both the physical and psychological contexts are important and

both seem to be subject to precise definition in terms of particular lessons, units, classes, or courses of study.

Second, there is the question of the goals to be achieved. While individual participants come with their own motivations and, no doubt, a wide variety of goals ranging from making a living by teaching to having a jolly time with friends; the goals of the instructional situation are usually available in unit plans, lesson plans, and course goals. Instruction always takes place for some stated purpose which may be judged along a continuum of achievement.

Third, there are the behaviors which constitute effective instructional communication for both teachers and learners. The growing literature cited early in this paper in education and instructional communication which is slowly assembling an increasingly longer list of behaviors which may differentiate effective and ineffective instructional communication behaviors on the part of teachers. Literature on effective instructional communication behaviors of students seems far more sparse though the work of Weinstein et al. (1979,1982) on in education and Trenholm and Rose (1981) in communication have made some suggestive first steps in attempting to define competent student responses in instructional exchanges.

Fourth, there is the fourth proposition from Spitzberg (1983) which asserts that competence in a specific interaction can only be fully or competently judged for appropriateness and effectiveness by the participants in that interaction episode. The authors take a reductionist point of view and reject this proposition on the grounds that they as researchers are competent to define criteria in a given instructional situation which will allow competence to be judged for appropriateness and effectiveness. In general, the authors feel that behavior within the context of instructional exchanges may be considered as competent and effective if it results in the attainment of the specified instructional goal.

There is a certain hubris in the stark reductionist position and the authors recognize that there may always be some disagreement about the categorization of a behavior as competent just because it is effective. Some of the complexity in the identification of competent behaviors is suggested by Pavitt and Haight (1985) who went so far as to speculate that a complete map of the behavioral repertoire which constitutes competent communication might be impossible to develop after their elaboration of the implications of their trying to understand the cognitive processes in attributions of competence. Then there is also the difficulty of connecting behaviors with outcomes which McCroskey (1982) noted as a key problem for the study of communication competence. However, these questions can be set aside until the model is further developed and employed. Then these can be revisited if actual problems arise in the definition of of competent instructional behaviors and in the demonstration that the utilization of more effective behaviors produces more student achievement.

A Relational Model of Instructional Communication

The Educational Context

- The Physical Context
- The Psychological Context
- The Situational Goals

The Goals of the Instructional Interaction

- Academic Achievement - Knowledge
- Academic Achievement - Skills

The Characteristics of the Teacher-Student Communicators

- Individual Knowledge of Situation
- Individual Goals
- Individual Motivation
- Individual Trait and State Variables
- Individual Knowledge of Communication Behaviors
- Individual Ability to Enact Communication Behaviors
- Individual Willingness to Enact Communication Behaviors
- Shared Perspectives, Codes, Referents, and Personal Attributes

The Behavioral Repertoire of Instructional Communication

- Competent Instructional Communication Behaviors of Teachers
- Competent Instructional Communication Behaviors of Students

The Outcomes of Instruction

- Academic Achievement Gains
- Affective Growth

While this model of the process of instructional communication is only in its early stages of development and will move toward its final form only with the definition and mapping of the various major components which have been identified, the outline of the model itself suggests some potential reorganization of some of the current approaches to instructional communication. For example, if the model is used as a basis for understanding instructional communication, the organization of courses which emphasize the development of skills for teachers might move away from the traditional speech education orientation of the Ohio courses described by DeWine and Pearson (1989) and move more toward the more relational orientation of the systems theory driven approach of the University of Washington Center for Instructional Development and

Research (CIDR) where such constructs as co-creation of meaning, uncertainty reduction, and rhetorical sensitivity guided the development of a program to enhance the instructional communication skills of university teachers (Nyquist, Wulff, and Abbott, 1989).

The next step is to organize what we already know about effective instructional communication behaviors of teachers and students to flesh out the model and start the process of making and testing propositional statements about the relationships which exist between competent teacher and student communication and achievement.

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